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ABSTRACT

Recommendations for reform of principal-preparation programs identify schools and school districts as important agents in the principal-preparation process. In the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), public school principals indicated whether or not they had formerly participated in any district or school training program for aspiring school principals. This brief presents the percentages of public school principals--overall, by sex and minority status, and by school locale and level--who reported having taken part in such programs. The brief also compares the participation rates of new principals (those with fewer than 4 years of experience) with the participation rates of more experienced principals (those with 4 or more years of experience). Findings indicate that in 1993-94, nearly one-half of new principals had participated in a school or district aspiring-principals program. Overall, greater percentages of female than male principals participated in aspiring-principals programs. More than half of all minority principals had taken part in such programs. Overall, participating principals were most likely to work in elementary central-city and urban-fringe schools than in secondary, rural schools. In general, new principals reported higher levels of participation in aspiring-principals programs than experienced principals. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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ED 405 644

ISSUE BRIEF

Programs For Aspiring Principals: Who Participates?

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Recommendations for reform of principal preparation programs identify schools and school districts as important agents in the principal preparation process (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration 1987). Reform advocates argue that schools and districts can offer practical training and guidance to prospective principals that may not be available from other sources. How much of a role, then, have school and district programs played in the principal preparation process? What percentage of public school principals have participated in school and district programs for aspiring principals? How do the participation rates for male and female principals and minority and white principals compare? Are principals who have participated in such programs more likely to work at particular school levels (e.g., elementary schools) or in particular school locales (e.g., central city schools)? Data available from the 1993–94 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), can be used to address these questions.

In the 1993–94 SASS, public school principals indicated if, prior to becoming a principal, they had participated in any district or school training or development program for aspiring school principals. This brief presents the percentages of public school principals—overall, by sex and minority status, and by school locale and level—who reported having taken part in such programs. In addition, to assess whether participation in these types of school and district programs has increased in recent years, this brief compares the participation rates of new principals (i.e., principals with fewer than 4 years of experience) with the participation rates of more experienced principals (i.e., principals with 4 or more years of experience).

In 1993–94, nearly one-half of new principals had participated in a school or district aspiring principals program.

In 1993–94, there were 79,618 public school principals; of these, 24,445 had fewer than 4 years of experience, and 55,173 had 4 or more years of experience. Approximately 39 percent of public school principals overall had taken part in an aspiring principals program in 1993–94 (table 1). About one-half of the new principals compared to about one-third of the principals with 4 or more years of experience had participated in such a program before becoming a principal.

Table 1. Percentage of public school principals who had participated in an aspiring principals program, by sex and race: 1993–94

	All	New*	Experienced*
Overall	38.9	47.2	35.2
Sex			
Male	35.7	44.9	32.6
Female	45.1	49.7	41.7
Race			
White	35.4	44.1	31.7
Minority	57.5	60.9	55.7

*New principals are principals with fewer than 4 years of experience. Experienced principals are those with 4 or more years of experience.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993–94 Schools and Staffing Survey (Public School Principal Questionnaire).

Overall, greater percentages of female than male principals participated in aspiring principals programs.

In 1993–94, about 45 percent of female principals compared to almost 36 percent of their male counterparts had taken part in an aspiring principals program (table 1). This pattern of greater female participation also characterizes the reported experiences of principals with 4 or more years of experience. In contrast, among new principals, similar percentages of female and male principals had participated in such programs.

More than half of all minority principals had taken part in an aspiring principals program.

Regardless of experience levels, larger percentages of minority principals than white principals reported participation in a district or school training program for aspiring principals. For example, among new public school principals, nearly 61 percent of minority principals versus about 44 percent of white principals participated in such a program before becoming a principal (table 1). The corresponding figures for experienced public school principals were almost 56 percent and about 32 percent for minority and white principals, respectively.

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Table 2. Percentage of public school principals who had participated in an aspiring principals program, by school locale and school level: 1993–94

	All	New*	Experienced*
Locale			
Central city	51.3	59.2	47.4
Urban fringe	42.7	50.3	39.5
Rural	30.6	39.3	26.9
Level			
Elementary	39.4	49.2	35.2
Secondary	36.5	42.3	34.0
Combined	39.9	42.4	38.4

*New principals are principals with fewer than 4 years of experience. Experienced principals are those with 4 or more years of experience.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993–94 Schools and Staffing Survey (Public School Principal and Public School Questionnaires).

Overall, principals who had participated in an aspiring principals program were most likely to work in central city and urban fringe schools as opposed to rural schools and in elementary as opposed to secondary schools.

In 1993–94, about half of the principals in central city schools had participated in an aspiring principals program (table 2). In comparison, approximately 43 percent of principals in urban fringe schools and about 31 percent of principals in rural schools had taken part in such programs. With regard to school level, elementary school principals were somewhat more likely than secondary school principals to have participated in a school or district aspiring principals program.

In general, new principals reported higher levels of participation in aspiring principals programs than experienced principals.

Overall, higher levels of participation in school or district programs were reported by new principals compared to experienced principals in 1993–94 (table 1). This pattern was repeated across both sexes, all the locale levels, both the elementary and secondary school levels, and by whites (tables 1 and 2). For example, about 45 percent of new male principals compared to about 33 percent of their experienced counterparts had participated in a school or district program for aspiring principals. Similarly, approximately 59 percent of new principals in central city schools compared to about 47 percent of experienced principals in those schools participated in such programs. The apparent small differences between new and experienced principals of combined schools and new and experienced minority principals are not significant.

Discussion

With the changes in school principals' responsibilities accompanying various education reform efforts, policy makers have recommended that schools and districts play greater roles in the principal preparation process (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration 1987). The evidence presented in this brief shows that, as of 1993–94, schools and districts were playing active roles in the preparation of more than one-third of public school principals overall and about one-half of minority principals and of principals who worked in central city schools. In addition, the findings that new principals were more likely than experienced principals to have participated in a local aspiring principals program suggest that participation in this sort of program has become increasingly important to the career development of all public school principals.

These findings raise additional questions that can be explored using SASS data. What other types of training are principals receiving in preparation for their positions as principals (e.g., serving administrative internships)? Do patterns of participation in aspiring principals programs differ for minority subgroups (e.g., for black, Hispanic, or Asian principals)?

Pertinent questions that reach beyond the SASS data include the following: What types of programs (e.g., internships, classes, and so forth) do schools and districts offer for aspiring principals? What information is provided in these programs? Are these school and district programs provided in conjunction with college or university programs? Are aspiring principals programs aimed at assistant principals, teachers, or others? Are participants invited to take part in programs or do participants elect to participate in aspiring principals programs? How are assistant principals being prepared to become principals, and how are teachers being prepared to become assistant principals? What percentage of participants in aspiring principals programs eventually become principals?

References and Related Publications

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This Issue Brief was prepared by Karen DeAngelis and Robert Rossi, American Institutes for Research. To obtain standard errors or definitions of terms for this Issue Brief, or to obtain additional information about the Schools and Staffing Survey, contact Charles H. Hammer (202) 219–1330. To order additional copies of this Issue Brief or other NCES publications, call 1–800–424–1616. NCES publications are available on the Internet at http://www.ed.gov/NCES.

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